



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

## Edinburgh Research Explorer

### Coloured dots and the question of regional origins in early Qur'ans

**Citation for published version:**

George, A 2015, 'Coloured dots and the question of regional origins in early Qur'ans: Part II', *Journal of Qur'anic Studies*, vol. 17, no. 2, pp. 75-102. <https://doi.org/10.3366/jqs.2015.0196>

**Digital Object Identifier (DOI):**

[10.3366/jqs.2015.0196](https://doi.org/10.3366/jqs.2015.0196)

**Link:**

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

**Document Version:**

Peer reviewed version

**Published In:**

Journal of Qur'anic Studies

**General rights**

Copyright for the publications made accessible via the Edinburgh Research Explorer is retained by the author(s) and / or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

**Take down policy**

The University of Edinburgh has made every reasonable effort to ensure that Edinburgh Research Explorer content complies with UK legislation. If you believe that the public display of this file breaches copyright please contact [openaccess@ed.ac.uk](mailto:openaccess@ed.ac.uk) providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.



## Coloured dots and the question of regional origins in early Qur'ans: Part II

Part I of the present article (*Journal of Qur'anic Studies*, 17:1) began with a summary of remarks about regional patterns of vocalisation offered by the Andalusī scholar of the Qur'an al-Dānī (371-444/982-1053), primarily in *al-Muḥkam fī naqṭ al-maṣāḥif*. These assertions were then confronted with extant manuscripts of the third to fourth/ninth to tenth centuries that can be ascribed to the broad region between Syria, Iraq and Iran. This analysis largely confirmed al-Dānī's observations, thereby suggesting the existence of a dominant norm for vocalisation in this area, which he identifies as the Mashriq. An increase in the complexity of notation systems over time also emerged. The same approach will now be applied to Qur'ans from the Maghrib. As shown in Part I, al-Dānī asserted that his region of origin possessed a distinctive vocalisation system with Madinan roots and local distinguishing features; on a few points, he also drew contrasts between earlier Maghribi conventions and those prevalent in his own day.<sup>1</sup>

### Abbreviations:

BNF: Bibliothèque Nationale de France (Paris)

CBL: Chester Beatty Library (Dublin)

Khalili: Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art (London and Geneva)

Met: Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York)

TIEM: Türk ve İslam Eserleri Müzesi (Istanbul)

## 2. Madina and the Maghrib

### The Qur'an of Faḍl (in or before 295/907)

This small Qur'an (10.5 x 16 cm for the largest pages) has only been published in scattered and incomplete fragments;<sup>2</sup> but it is of potential importance because of its

---

<sup>1</sup> For al-Dānī's statements about the Maghrib, see Alain George, "Coloured Dots and the Question of Regional Origins in Early Qur'ans: Part I," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies*, pp. 7-11 and Table 1 ???.

<sup>2</sup> Edward Denison Ross, "Some Rare MSS Seen in Tunis," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies* 3, no. 3 (1924), 614-615 and Pl.; Ibrāhīm Shabbūh, "Sijil qadīm li-maktabat jāmi' al-qayrawān," *Majallat ma'had al-makhtūṭāt al-'arabiyya* (*Revue de l'Institut des Manuscrits Arabes*) 2, no. 2 (1956), 339 and Pl. 1; Bernard Roy, Paule Poinssot, and Louis Poinssot, *Inscriptions arabes de Kairouan* (Paris: Librairie C. Klincksieck, 1950), 34 (No. 9 bis); Ḥasan Ḥusnī 'Abd al-Wahhāb, *Shahīrāt al-tūnisīyyāt: baḥṭh tārikhī adabī fī ḥayāt al-nisā' al-nawābiḡh bi'l-quṭr al-tūnisī* (Tunis: Al-maṭba'a al-tūnisīyya, 1966), 30-31; Muḥammad al-Miqdād al-Wartatānī, *Al-burnus fī bārīs. Riḥla ilā faransā wa-suwīsrā, 1913*, ed. Sa'īd al-Fāḍilī (Abu Dhabi/Beirut: Dār al-suwayḍī/Al-mu'assasa al-'arabiyya li'l-dirāsāt wa'l-nashr, 2004), 202. One page attributed to this manuscript has also been

link to Qayrawan. It is written in style D.III with 6 lines to the page, and was initially bound in 30 volumes corresponding to as many *ajzā'*. Several hundred folios, most of them still sewn in quires, are preserved at the Musée National d'Art Islamique in Raqqada, near Qayrawan (the largest section is preserved under shelfmark R64a); four additional folios are at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France (Arabe 5178m, ff. 18-21).<sup>3</sup> Each volume originally opened with a *waqfiyya* written on a double-page spread, followed by a double spread of illumination, then by the Qur'anic text. The text of the *waqfiyyāt* reads as follows, with minor variations between different volumes:

*Bismillāh al-raḥmān al-raḥīm, hādhā ma ḥabasat faḍl mawlāt abī ayyūb aḥmad bin muḥammad raḥamahu allāh t[ā]lib<sup>an</sup> li-thawāb allāh wa 'l-dār al-'ākhira. Raḥama allāh man qara 'a fihā wa da 'ā li-ṣāḥibatihā wa katabat faḍl bi-khaṭṭihā fī al-muḥarram sanat khams wa tis 'īn wa mā' atayn.*

In the name of God, the clement, the merciful. This was endowed by Faḍl, *mawlāt* of Abū Ayyūb Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad, God have mercy on him, seeking the reward of God and the abode of the afterlife. God, have mercy on whoever reads from it and prays for its owner. Faḍl wrote in her hand in *muḥarram* of the year 295 (October-November 907).<sup>4</sup>

Most writers have thus far assumed that Faḍl was the scribe of this Qur'an, which would probably entail a provenance in Qayrawan, even though the city is not named in the deed. This hypothesis stems from the statement that 'Faḍl wrote in her hand;' yet the script of the *waqfiyyāt* is stylistically unrelated to the calligraphy of the Qur'anic text, and rather appears a precursor of the New Style, but with relatively uneasy execution. The strokes lack the clarity and assurance of Qur'anic calligraphy,

---

published by Murād al-Rammāh, "Tasāfir maktabat al-qayrawān al-'atīqa," in *Dirāsāt al-makṭūṭāt al-islāmīyya bayn i 'tibārāt al-mādda wa 'l-bashar*, ed. R. 'Inānī (London: Al-Furqān Islamic Heritage Foundation, 1997), 142 and Pl. 2. But its calligraphy and vocalisation seem to differ from those of the Qur'an of Faḍl: since the quality of the reproduction does not allow a detailed analysis, it has been left aside for our present purposes.

<sup>3</sup> I thank François Déroche for bringing the Paris fragment to my attention, and for generously sharing his knowledge of this manuscript, including most of the above bibliographical references. For a brief description of Arabe 5178m, see Déroche, *Les manuscrits du Coran* (I, 1), 124 (No. 197). The full fragment can be consulted on Gallica.

<sup>4</sup> Reading by the present writer from unpublished images by François Déroche. See also Ross, "Some Rare MSS Seen in Tunis," Pl. (where the date was erroneously read as 275); Roy, Poinssot, and Poinssot, *Inscriptions arabes de Kairouan*, 34; 'Abd al-Wahhāb, *Shahīrāt al-tūnisīyyāt*, 30-31.

and tend to be hazy. Within the few sentences of the *waqfiyya*, Faḍl also omitted several words or letters, which she then added between the lines.<sup>5</sup> It seems unlikely that she was a professional scribe or that she wrote the main text: she probably acquired this manuscript from an unknown source and donated it to the Great Mosque of Qayrawan. Indeed, the *waqfiyyāt* refer to her as the ‘owner’ on whom blessings should be brought (the use of the feminine makes this association unambiguous). Thus the local origin of this Qur’an cannot be ascertained, and its chronology could potentially extend to the decades before the *waqfiyyāt* were drawn up.

A radiocarbon analysis has been performed on a parchment sample from the manuscript in Lyon at the request of François Déroche: the test indicates a date range between 716 and 891 A.D., with a 95% probability.<sup>6</sup> The upper limit of this range thus predates the *waqfiyyāt* by 16 years: this points to the possibility of an earlier production, without being sufficient in itself to establish it. At any rate, the manuscript cannot serve as firm evidence of regional trends in early Qur’ans. The main features of its vocalisation will nevertheless be outlined for reference:

- Red dots for vowels, *hamza* and *tanwīn*;
- A red dot to the right of *alif* for *hamza*, and to its left for *hamza* preceded or followed by *madd*;
- Green for variants: green dots for variants involving vowels, the pronunciation or elision of a *hamza*, and for letters pronounced with *imāla* by some readers; a vertical green line for variants involving *alif maḥdhūfa*, e.g. *al-mushāriq wa’l-mughārib* instead of *al-mashriq wa’l-maghrib* in Q. 2:115 (Figure 1, ll. 1-2; variant not listed in the literature).

This vocalisation system is close to that of a Qur’an completed at Isfahan in 383/993,<sup>7</sup> with the difference that several cases of variants are noted through the same green dot: as in the earlier Qur’ans studied previously,<sup>8</sup> more reliance was thereby placed on the training of readers and their ability to identify the implications of each sign. The

<sup>5</sup> For example amongst the *waqfiyyāt* of R64a, three of the four letters forming the word *allāh* were initially forgotten in two different pages, as was the name of the month in another page; all of them were then added above the line, in the same hand.

<sup>6</sup> Personal communication from François Déroche; unpublished analysis performed at the Centre de Datation pour le Radiocarbène, CNRS UMR 5138, Lyon (France).

<sup>7</sup> See George, ‘Coloured dots: Part I,’ ???.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., ???.

manuscript, on the other hand, does not match al-Dānī's description of Maghribi vocalisation. Several explanations suggest themselves. Such vocalisation may have been used at Qayrawan, perhaps by some teachers rather than others, given the relative proximity of this city to Egypt and the East. This possibility is brought to mind by the Qur'an of the Nurse, copied in that city in 410/1020, which notably uses green *hamza* in the modern form along with a range of other signs, including green horizontal strokes for *ṣila*.<sup>9</sup> The existence of numerous fragments that do carry 'Maghribi' vocalisation in the Qayrawan collection might imply that different conventions coexisted in that centre.

But just as plausibly, the Qur'an of Faḍl may have been produced in Egypt or the East and later brought to Qayrawan. Indeed, some fragments brought to European collections from the Great Mosque of Fustat in the 19<sup>th</sup> century appear to match others in the Qayrawan collection, which suggests some degree of circulation between these two cities.<sup>10</sup> Another witness of such exchange may be BNF Arabe 376b, which was made a *waqf* at the Great Mosque of Fustāt in 366/977: its script is a derivative of the D styles, moving away from its classical forms, and its vocalisation closely matches al-Dānī's characterisation of Maghribi conventions, notably the use of a yellow dot for *hamza*, a green dot paired with a horizontal stroke for *alif al-waṣl*, and a vertical red stroke for *alif maḥdhūfa*.<sup>11</sup> In sum, because it lacks a definite geographical attribution, the Qur'an of Faḍl raises more questions than it answers with regard to regional trends in vocalisation.

**Figure 1. Page from the Qur'an of Faḍl (Q. 2:115-116). Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Arabe 5178m, f. 18r. Page dimensions 10.2 x 14.7 cm.**

### **The Palermo Qur'an (Palermo, 372/983)**

This manuscript was written in a round version of the New Style in 372/983 in the capital of Muslim Sicily, then under the nominal rule of the Fatimid dynasty. A statement about the uncreated nature of the Qur'an in its opening illuminations

<sup>9</sup> See for colour images from different collections David Roxburgh, *Writing the Word of God. Calligraphy and the Qur'an* (Houston: The Museum of Fine Arts, 2007), Fig. 12-13 and cover images; <http://www.metmuseum.org/Collections/search-the-collections/140014390> (accessed 20/12/2012); <http://www.davidmus.dk/en/collections/islamic/materials/calligraphy/art/252003> (accessed 20/12/2012). About the manuscript, cf. also Déroche, *Le livre manuscrit arabe*, 54.

<sup>10</sup> Personal communication from François Déroche.

<sup>11</sup> For a description, see Déroche, *Les manuscrits du Coran (I, 1)*, 129 (No. 216).

suggests that it was produced by a Sunni community.<sup>12</sup> The verse markers are, in all likelihood, original, since an empty space has been left for them while writing the manuscript. An impressive amount of information has been fitted into a text area of only 9.5 x 16 cm: seventeen lines of text, extensive vocalisation, and in some pages illuminations. Their successful integration suggests a concerted design, an idea confirmed by the unusual care taken by the illuminator not to cover any part of the calligraphy, however small, even if this meant adapting his work to the form of existing letters (see the golden *hā'* in Figure 4, l. 4). I was unable to observe any clear overlaps between the vocalisation and illumination. Verse and fifth verse markers are decorated with green and red dots: from reproductions, the latter appear to be the same as in the vocalisation, to the extent that in cases of contiguity, it can be difficult to tell them apart (golden *hā'*, Figure 6, l. 2). There is, in sum, every reason to think that the vocalisation and illumination are original.

**Figure 2. Folio from the Palermo Qur'an (Q. 22:21-30). London and Geneva, Nasser D. Khalili Collection, QUR261, f. 4a. Page dimensions 17.6 x 25 cm.**

**Figure 3. Detail of folio from the Palermo Qur'an (Q. 22:13). London and Geneva, Nasser D. Khalili Collection, QUR261, f. 3b.**

**Figure 4. Detail of folio from the Palermo Qur'an (Q. 25:32-36). London and Geneva, Nasser D. Khalili Collection, QUR261, f. 6b.**

**Figure 5. Detail of folio from the Palermo Qur'an (Q. 26:101-113). London and Geneva, Nasser D. Khalili Collection, QUR368, f. 10b.**

**Figure 6. Detail of folio from the Palermo Qur'an (part of Q. 23:44 and 23:45). London and Geneva, Nasser D. Khalili Collection, QUR261, f. 8b.**

In the vocalisation:

- Red dots indicate vowels and *tanwīn*;
- Yellow dots indicate *hamza*; as a general rule, the dot is placed to the upper right of initial *alif* for *hamza* with *fatha*; to its upper left for *hamza* followed by *madd*; to its lower left for *hamza* with *damma*; and directly below it for *kasra*;
- A red *shīn* indicates *shadda*;
- A vertical red line indicates *alif maḥdhūfa* (e.g. Figure 4, l. 1, *rattalnāhu*);

<sup>12</sup> Déroche, *The Abbasid Tradition*, 146 (No. 81); François Déroche, "Cercles et entrelacs: format et décor des corans maghrébins médiévaux," *Comptes Rendus des Séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres* (2001): 596–604; George, *The Rise of Islamic Calligraphy*, 142–143.

- An oblique red line inclined to the right indicates cases of *alif maḥdhūfa* preceded by *lām* (e.g. Figure 3, *al-mawlā*); the sign is placed before the *lām*, even though it is pronounced after it;<sup>13</sup>
- A red horizontal stroke in the position of the last short vowel of the previous word indicates *ṣila*, e.g. Figure 4, l. 4, *fa-qulnā 'idhhabā*, recited *fa-qulnā-dhhabā*;
- Blue dots indicate the position of the *hamza* on *alif al-waṣl*, for cases where the reader will have marked a pause (*waqf*) at the previous word (e.g. Figure 4, l. 4, *fa-qulnā* [pause] *'idhhabā*);<sup>14</sup> because they are linked to *ṣila*, these dots normally appear next to a red horizontal stroke;
- In *lā-bi'sa al-mawlā wa la-bi'sa al-'ashīr* (Q. 22:13; Figure 3), the same two signs appear below the *hamza* of *la-bi'sa*; this seems to indicate two readings: one with *hamza* (blue dot), i.e. the standard convention, and the other with *yā'* (*la-bīsa*, red stroke), as in the reading of Warsh, Abū Ja'far, al-Iṣfahānī, al-Azraq and Abū 'Amr;<sup>15</sup>
- A red semi-circle, sometimes with one red dot (or two red dots for *tanwīn*), indicates *idghām*; when pointing upwards, it is pronounced with *fatha*; when placed above the line and pointing downwards, with *ḍamma*; and when placed below the line and pointing downwards, with *kasra*; e.g. Figure 4, l. 3, *'ulā'ika sharr<sup>un</sup> makān<sup>an</sup> wa 'aḍallu sabīl<sup>an</sup>* (Q. 25:34), recited *'ulā'ika sharr<sup>um</sup>-makān<sup>aw</sup>-wa 'aḍallu sabīl<sup>an</sup>* (letters carrying the sign are underlined; note that the word *'aḍallu* features an unusual instance of the same sign being used to simply mark *shadda*);
- Small red circles denote *sukūn*, e.g. Figure 4, *rattalnāhu* (l. 1); *'ulā'ika* (l. 3); *ja'alnā* (l. 4); *fa-qulnā* (l. 4); *fa'alnā* (l. 14);
- Small yellow and blue circles denote different cases of *sukūn* followed or preceded by *hamza* (in which cases the latter is noted either through a yellow or a blue dot), e.g. Figure 2, l. 12, *ya'tūka*; Figure 4, l. 1, *wa lā ya'tūnaka*;

<sup>13</sup> The rationale for distinguishing this case remains unclear. Some but not all of these cases may have been pronounced with *imāla* – for a definition, see Aryeh Levin, art. '*Imāla*,' in Kees Versteegh et al., eds., *Encyclopedia of Arabic Language and Linguistics* (Leiden: Brill, 200607), v. 2, 311–312.

<sup>14</sup> As already noted by Dutton, "Red Dots (II)," 13.

<sup>15</sup> 'Abd al-Laṭīf Muḥammad al-Khaṭīb, *Mu'jam al-qirā'āt* (Damascus: Dār sa'd al-dīn li'l-ṭibā'a wa'l-nashr wa'l-tawzī', 2002), v. 6, 89.

- An oblique red stroke, often associated with a blue circle and blue dot, marks cases in which the *hamza* is dropped in some readings, e.g. Figure 5, l. 2, *mu' minīn/mūminīn*; l. 7, *nu' min/nūmin*; Figure 6, l. 1, *yu' minīn/yūminīn*,<sup>16</sup>
- *Fā' /qāf* could not be studied, since the manuscript only has very rare diacritical marks; these are noted in red, typically to distinguish *yā'* from *tā'* at the beginning of a verb.

The manuscript corroborates al-Dānī's assertions about the Maghrib in its most fundamental aspects: the red, yellow and blue dots; the small red circles for *sukūn*; and the vertical red lines for *alif maḥdhūfa*. Small divergences can also be noted: the 'Iraqi' convention of placing the dot of initial *alif* for *madd* has been followed (although here it remains yellow, rather than red); a small *shīn* rather than a small *dāl* denotes *shadda*; the use of a blue dot and red stroke do mark *ṣila*, as al-Dānī asserts, but also the occasional variant. Some signs also fall beyond the scope of his observations: the red semi-circles for *idghām*; the blue and yellow circles for different cases of *sukūn*; and the cases of *alif maḥdhūfa* marked by an oblique red stroke, rather than a vertical one. Their scope remains limited to amplifications on the same set of notational features.

### A Kufic-Maghribi corpus

Scattered leaves from a small corpus of Kufic manuscripts display a distinctive array of orthographic features associated with the Maghrib (Figure 8-Figure 12). I have identified over a dozen of these, two of them dated to the late fourth to early fifth/early eleventh century. Some were only published in black-and-white, but a comparison with colour images suggests that we are dealing with a consistent pattern. Throughout this sample one can observe:

- Red dots for vowels and *tanwīn*;
- A yellow dot for *hamza*;
- A short red horizontal stroke for *sukūn*;
- A short red horizontal stroke for *ṣila*, in the position of the last short vowel of the previous word;

---

<sup>16</sup> Khaṭīb, *Mu'jam*, v. 1, 30, 310.



- A green or blue dot for the *hamza* of *alif al-waṣl*, for cases in which the reader has stopped at the previous word;
- A vertical red line for *alif maḥdhūfa*; in some cases, this is a fully formed miniature *alif* with lower return (Figure 11; Figure 12, l. 12);
- Semi-circles drawn in a thin red (or sometimes green) line for *shadda*: like the *idghām* signs of the Palermo Qur'an, they are open upwards for *fatha*; downwards and above the line for *ḍamma*; downwards and below the line for *kasra*; in some cases, the semi-circle encloses a red dot; I was unable to determine the reason for adding or omitting this dot;
- A long red horizontal stroke for *madd*, in some manuscripts only.

The same vocalisation also occurs in one of the earliest Qur'ans in Maghribi script proper (TIEM 13216), dated *rajab* 398/March-April 1008 by its colophon, which gives us a first indication about chronology.<sup>17</sup> These features match al-Dānī's observations about Maghribi Qur'ans in almost every detail. The only discrepancy lies in the notation of *shadda* with a semi-circle, whereas he describes it as a *dāl*. Even this minor difference might be explained by the angle often seen at the inflection of the sign: this makes it resemble a *dāl*, which may have been its original form.<sup>18</sup> Indeed the conventions that govern its use, with a sign opening upwards for *fatha* and placed below the letter for *kasra*, echo al-Dānī's assertion that '*mushaddad* letters carry a *dāl*, and this *dāl* opens upwards' and that 'for *kasr*, [it was placed] below the letter.'<sup>19</sup> This small corpus also features two conventions which specifically distinguished the Maghrib from Madina, according to al-Dānī: the use of a red stroke, rather than a red circle, for *sukūn*; and of a red stroke and green dot, rather than a red circle, for *alif al-waṣl*. Finally, the manuscripts rarely carry diacritical signs, but those that do have their dot below *fā* and above *qāf*.<sup>20</sup>

The vocalisation of these manuscripts thus points to a Maghribi origin, an idea supported by idiosyncratic features in their calligraphy and decoration that set them apart from the mainstream of the Kufic tradition. In several of the manuscripts, fifth

<sup>17</sup> Blair, *Islamic Calligraphy*, 224 (Fig. 6.15). Here the phrase *fi al-'arḍ* occurs with a red dot over the second *alif*, rather than a yellow dot for *hamza*. This may reflect the reading of Warsh, in which this *hamza* is elided; see Khaṭīb, *Mu'jam*, v. 1, 45.

<sup>18</sup> This is particularly clear in BNF Arabe 337c, where this sign appears in green (images available on Gallica).

<sup>19</sup> See George, 'Coloured dots: Part I,' ???

<sup>20</sup> E.g. Christie's (London), 14 October 1997, Lots 39, 40; Bonhams (London), 21 April 1999, Lot 513.

verse markers are noted as a golden *hā'*, a common formula in Kufic, but distinguished here by an upper part in the shape of a semi-palmette (Figure 12, l. 6); similar forms also appear in the Palermo Qur'an and in later Maghribi manuscripts.<sup>21</sup> At the level of calligraphy, these Kufic Qur'ans display a relatively constant tendency to thicken the body of compact letters, such as *wāw*, *qāf*, *hā'*, *rā'*, and the curving horizontal part of final *jīm* and final *yā'*. This gives a basic visual unity to an otherwise heterogeneous group. The full description of these writing styles falls beyond the scope of the present study, and would require the analysis of larger manuscript samples. For the time being, a few specimens will be highlighted in order to give the reader a sense of the aesthetic tendencies involved.

#### A one-volume Qur'an dated 393/1003 (Figure 8).

This small manuscript with fourteen lines to the page is held at the Tareq Rajab Museum (Kuwait).<sup>22</sup> In its calligraphy (Figure 7):

- Independent *alif* has a medium, rounded lower return, as in D.I;
- *Nūn* has a curved head and horizontal return of medium length;
- The two eyes of medial *hā'* are aligned vertically and grouped in the right half of the letter, whereas the left half is filled with ink; the letter is in the shape of a slightly inclined drop, and bulges below the baseline;
- Initial *'ayn* has a thick lower stroke and thin upper stroke, joined at an approximately right angle.

The style is thus a relatively close derivation of D.I, with slightly divergent forms for *hā'* and *nūn*. The emblematic monumentality of the original style has given way to miniature calligraphy executed in a thin pen, with a tendency towards sharper angles at junctions between strokes. Fragments from one or several other Qur'ans bear the same vocalisation and are written in a closely related script.<sup>23</sup> The Rajab manuscript is dated through a colophon executed in yellow or gold Kufic script outlined in a thin

<sup>21</sup> See also Christie's, 20 April 1999, Lots 303, 304; Bonhams, 21 April 1999, Lot 513. For later Maghribi examples, see François Déroche, *Les manuscrits du Coran. Du Maghreb à l'Insulinde*, Catalogue des manuscrits arabes Deuxième partie: manuscrits musulmans. Tome I, 2 (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale de France, 1985), Pl. III-B (ca. 807/1405), XIV-B (703/1304), XV-B (ninth/fifteenth century); Crofton Black and Nabil Saidi, *Islamic Manuscripts*, Catalogue 22, Sam Fogg Rare Books & Manuscripts (London: Sam Fogg Rare Books and Manuscripts, 2003), 17 (Cat. 5, sixth/twelfth century); Roxburgh, *Writing the Word of God*, Fig. 14–15 (both seventh–eighth/thirteenth–fourteenth century).

<sup>22</sup> Nabil Safwat, Géza Fehérvári, and Mohamed Zakariya, *The Harmony of Letters. Islamic Calligraphy from the Tareq Rajab Museum (Kuwait)* (Singapore: National Heritage Board, 1997), 36–37.

<sup>23</sup> Christie's (London), 14 October 1997, Lots 38, 41; Christie's (London), 20 April 1999, Lot 304 (now in Kuwait, Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyyah, LNS 318 MS); Christie's (London), 10 October 2000, Lot 4.

black line, the common chrysography technique of the period (Figure 8). Its writing style is again close to D.I, but with rounded hooks that reach below the horizontal baseline, as in style D.V and in the Palermo Qur'an.<sup>24</sup> It reads (with erased parts in curly brackets):

*Yā' w n. Fī'l-nabratayn al-maksūratayn qultu al-'ūlā yā'. Wa fī'l-maḍmūmatayn qultu al-'ūlā wāw<sup>an</sup>, wa fī'l-maftūḥatayn yusqaṭ<sup>25</sup> al-'ūlā, wa 'l-maftūḥatayn min kalima wāḥida yudkhal { 'alayhā } alif<sup>an</sup>. Wa tamma fī shahr rajab sanat thal[ā]th wa tis 'īn wa thal[ā]th mā'a fa raḥama allāh kātibahu wa kāсібahu { ... } wa ṣalla (sic) allāh 'alā muḥammad wa 'ālihi wa sallama taslīm<sup>an</sup>.*

*Yā' Wāw Nūn.* In cases of two *hamzāt* with *kasra*, I say the first one is a *yā'*; for two [*hamzāt*] with *ḍamma*, I say the first one is a *wāw*; for two [*hamzāt*] with *fatḥa*, the first one is dropped; and in cases of two [*hamzāt*] with *fatḥa* within the same word, an *alif* should be introduced. This was completed in the month of *rajab* of the year 393 [May-June 1003]. May God have mercy on its scribe and its owner; ... may the peace and blessings of God be on Muḥammad and his family.

**Figure 7. Double page from a Kufic-Maghribi Qur'an dated 393/1003 (Q. 15:57-16:1). Kuwait, Tareq Rajab Museum, no shelfmark. Page dimensions 12.8 x 19 cm.**

**Figure 8. Colophon of a Kufic-Maghribi Qur'an dated 393/1003. Kuwait, Tareq Rajab Museum, no shelfmark. Page dimensions 12.8 x 19 cm.**

The word *nabra*, at the beginning of the text, is a relatively rare synonym of *hamza*; it occurs, among other places, in the *Muḥkam*.<sup>26</sup> The different cases of two consecutive *hamzāt* evoked here are also mentioned in al-Dānī's treatise.<sup>27</sup> He notably records the convention, in some schools in the Maghrib, of adding a red *alif* or red stroke (*maṭṭa*) between two *hamzāt* that carry a *fatḥa* if these are in the same word; and of dropping the first *hamza* in cases of two *hamzāt* with *fatḥa* in consecutive words: these precisely correspond to the injunctions of the colophon.

<sup>24</sup> I thank Mr. Rajab for his permission to publish this image and for sharing an initial transcription carried out by him.

<sup>25</sup> The two diacritical dashes below the initial *yā'* are a grammatical error: this word should presumably read *tusqaṭ*.

<sup>26</sup> George, 'Coloured dots: Part I,' ???.

<sup>27</sup> Dānī, *Muḥkam*, 97, 110, 112.

Al-Dānī goes on to discuss cases in which two consecutive *hamzāt* both carry a *kasra* (or *ḍamma*). However he only refers to the elision or softening of either *hamza*, as opposed to the instruction in the colophon to replace them with a full letter of the same sound (i.e. *yāʾ* for *hamza maksūra*, *wāw* for *hamza maḍmūma*). On the other hand, the latter readings do appear in the *qirāʾāt* literature, where they are attributed to Qālūn, an early Madinan authority with a wide following in the Maghrib repeatedly cited by al-Dānī. Indeed the word *nabra* appears in the *Muḥkam* next to one of these citations, to which it probably belongs.<sup>28</sup> Thus these indications are in broad agreement with the idea of an origin in the Maghrib, whilst providing a first element of chronology for this Kufic corpus.

The closing invocation in favour of the scribe and owner imply that they were two different persons, hence that the manuscript was either commissioned by a patron or produced for the market. The formula used to designate them (*kātibahu wa kāsibahu*) is the same as in a Maghribi Qurʾan of 1040 A.D. (Figure 10), although too few other colophons of the period are known to determine whether this formulation was a specificity of the Islamic West.

#### A fragment at the Bibliothèque Nationale de Tunisie (Figure 9):

In this fragment, independent *alif* has a long, relatively flattened lower return, as in D.III; this feature is shared by other specimens in the Kufic-Maghribi corpus.<sup>29</sup> The round letters, notably *wāw* and final *hāʾ*, have particularly thickened bodies; they are often of nearly the same height as the tall letters, such as *alif* and *lām*. Final *nūn* is thickened at the top and base, and has a thin vertical shaft. This writing style is closely related to that of a colophon written on 6 *ṣafar* 432/16 October 1040 (Figure 10).<sup>30</sup> It records the completion of a Qurʾan written in an early type of ‘classical’ Maghribi calligraphy, of which the last few lines can be seen on the same page. This document thus confirms a link between this style and the Maghrib, in addition to providing a second chronological pointer. The colophon is (expectedly) unvocalised,

<sup>28</sup> Khaṭīb, *Muʿjam*, v. 1, 76; v. 8, 513; Dānī, *Muḥkam*, 8. It is difficult, in this case, to determine the exact end of the citation: the editor placed it at the end of the previous sentence, but it could equally include this word.

<sup>29</sup> The Tunis fragment was published in Paris, *De Carthage à Kairouan. 2000 ans d'art et d'histoire en Tunisie (Musée du Petit Palais de la Ville de Paris, 20 octobre 1982-27 février 1983)* (Paris: Association Française d'Action Artistique, 1982), Cat. 354. For related fragments, see Bonhams (London), 11 October 2000, Lots 3a, 3b.

<sup>30</sup> François Déroche, “Deux fragments coraniques maghrébins anciens au Musée de Arts Turc et Islamique d’Istanbul,” *Revue des Etudes Islamiques* 59 (1991): 231–232.

but the elements of vocalisation that can be seen in the adjoining Maghribi calligraphy (namely *shadda*, *ṣila* and *sukūn*) do follow the Kufic-Maghribi conventions outlined above.

**Figure 9. Qur'an folio in Kufic-Maghribi calligraphy (Q. 6:83-86). Tunis, Bibliothèque Nationale de Tunisie, unknown shelfmark. Page dimensions 18.2 x 25.5 cm.**

**Figure 10. Final page of a Maghribi Qur'an dated 432/1040 (Q. 113:4-114:6 and colophon). Istanbul, Türk ve İslam Eserleri Müzesi, ŞE13644/1. Page dimensions 14.4 x 17.5 cm.**

BNF Arabe 6982 (Figure 11):

This manuscript has a long, rounded and tapering lower return for independent *alif*, which recalls D.I; a medial *hā'* that bulges below the baseline, as in B.II and D.IV; a widely open initial *ʿayn* reminiscent of in D.III. This style is further distinguished by the uniformly accentuated thickness of its strokes and its prominent triangular endings, as in final *nūn*, in independent *bā'/tā'* and in the upper stroke of *dāl* and initial *kāf*. Closely related writing styles occur in a manuscript that belonged to the Madrasa of Ibn Yusuf (Marrakesh) in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and a quire offered for sale at Drouot (Paris) in 1975.<sup>31</sup>

**Figure 11. Folio from a Kufic-Maghribi Qur'an (Q. 13:43-14:5). Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Arabe 6982, f. 21v. Page dimensions 20 x 28 cm.**

Khalili KFQ70 (Figure 12):

In this manuscript, *alif* has a variable lower return, from short to long. Final *mīm* has a round body and a very thin tail, either straight or curved. Final *nūn* has a thickened head and nearly no lower return. Small rounded hooks occasionally reach underneath the baseline for letter connections, as in the Palermo Qur'an (Figure 12, middle of l. 9, *ghanīyy<sup>an</sup> fa l-yasta fīf*). Closely related fragments have been sold at London auction houses.<sup>32</sup>

**Figure 12. Qur'an folio in Kufic-Maghribi calligraphy (Q. 4:3-7). London and Geneva, Nasser D. Khalili Collection, KFQ70, verso. Page dimensions 18.3 x 25.5 cm.**

<sup>31</sup> Bergsträsser and Pretzl, *Geschichte*, Abb. 3; Boisgirard, Hôtel Drouot (Paris), 23 June 1975, Lot 104.

<sup>32</sup> For KFQ70, cf. also Déroche, *The Abbasid Tradition*, 123, 125 (No. 68). Related fragments: Bonhams (London), 17 October 2001, Lot 1; Christie's (London), 28 April 1998, Lot 19; Quaritch (London), Catalogue 1366, Islamic manuscripts (2008), item L. 2.

Additional manuscripts bearing the same vocalisation were written in scripts representing further variations on classical Kufic. For example, BNF Arabe 337c has some formal characteristics that suggest a parallel with D.IV, but its thickened strokes and accentuated angles result in a distinct style.<sup>33</sup> In a leaf from a private collection, the writing style is loosely reminiscent of E.I, but with slanting vertical strokes, an amplified return of final *nūn* that evokes the beginning of a loop, and a lower return for independent *alif*, whereas E.I is characterised by the absence of this return.<sup>34</sup>

In all of these scripts, elements rooted in classical Kufic calligraphy are evident, but they have been reshuffled and more or less radically transformed to give rise to a different aesthetic: these derivative styles must have evolved out of the D group in Spain or the broader Maghrib. More examples probably remain to be found in the collections of Qayrawan, Marrakesh and Fes. The available elements of date converge to place these manuscripts around the lifetime of al-Dānī, in the fourth to fifth/tenth to eleventh century, although some may conceivably be earlier.

These findings bring to mind a remark by the historian Ibn al-Fayyāḍ, who wrote in the fifth/eleventh century: ‘In the eastern suburb of Cordoba, there were 170 women who copied the Qur’an in Kufic calligraphy.’<sup>35</sup> Although he does not elaborate on the meaning of ‘Kufic,’ Ibn al-Fayyāḍ might have been referring to the above script types, which belong to the same period and have clear stylistic connections to the central Islamic lands. This passage also highlights the existence of women copyists of the Qur’an in the Maghrib; those mentioned here appear to have worked for the market, and were presumably not religious scholars.

### **Classical Kufic fragments vocalised in the Madinan-Maghribi tradition**

Some manuscripts belonging squarely in the Kufic tradition do also display distinctive Madinan-Maghribi traits in their vocalisation. Thus the catalogue of early Qur’ans at BNF lists a dozen manuscripts with red dots for their vowels and yellow dots for

<sup>33</sup> This singular aspect was noted by Déroche, *Les manuscrits du Coran (I, 1)*, 109 (No. 146). Images consulted on Gallica.

<sup>34</sup> Christie’s (London), 14 October 1997, Lot 39. For dated *waqfiyyāt* in style E.I, see Déroche, “Collections de manuscrits anciens,” Pl. Ia, IVa.

<sup>35</sup> *Kāna bi’l-rabaḍ al-sharqī min qurṭuba mā’a wa sab’ūn imra’a kulluhunna yaktubna al-maṣāḥif bi’l-khaṭṭ al-kūfī*. Cited from the *History of Ibn al-Fayyāḍ* by ‘Abd al-Wāḥid ibn ‘Alī al-Tamīmī al-Marrākushi, *Kitāb al-mu’jib fī talkhīṣ akhbār al-maghrib (The History of the Almohades)*, ed. Reinhart Pieter Anne Dozy (Leiden: London Society for the Publication of Oriental Texts, 1847), 270. Cf. also S. M. Imamuddin, *Muslim Spain 711-1492 A.D. A Sociological Study* (Leiden: Brill, 1981), 143; Déroche, *Le livre manuscrit arabe*, 49.

*hamza*.<sup>36</sup> Déroche classified these under various styles: B.II (Arabe 329d, 6982); D.I (Arabe 348a, 354b, 366b, 5178c); D.II (Arabe 349e, 352b, 356h, 378); D.IV (Arabe 337c), and common D (Arabe 343, 376b). But some of these specimens are in fact derivative in their calligraphy, as shown above for Arabe 6982 and Arabe 337c; the same is true of Arabe 343 and Arabe 376b, written in distinctive styles related to D. Amongst classical Kufic fragments proper, three configurations can be distinguished: manuscripts with extensive Maghribi vocalisation, comparable with that of the above corpus; manuscripts with more limited Maghribi vocalisation; manuscripts with vocalisation signs essentially reduced to red and yellow dots.

*(i) Kufic manuscripts with full Maghribi vocalisation*

A few classical Kufic fragments display the full range of conventions observed in the above Kufic-Maghribi corpus. This is the case with CBL Is. 1411, written in a style close to D.III (Figure 13); its Maghribi vocalisation has already been noted by Sheila Blair.<sup>37</sup> Here one encounters yellow *hamza*; *shadda* marked with a semi-circle, including cases in which *tashdīd* it is caused by *idghām*; a blue dot and horizontal red stroke for *ṣila*; and a horizontal red stroke for *sukūn*. *Alif maḥdhūfa* is written in red. Interestingly, *takhfīf* and *ḥuruf zawā'id* are noted with a small red circle, the convention described by al-Dānī for Madina and the early Maghrib. For example, the phrase 'a ra 'ayta (Q. 96:9, 11; Figure 13, f. 6b, ll. 5, 8) has a red *alif* after the *rā'* and a small red circle before the *yā'*: this reflects the reading 'ā rāyta, with the addition of one *alif* and the elision of a *hamza* (al-Azraq 'an Warsh).<sup>38</sup> The manuscript has fifth verse markers consisting of a golden *hā'* ending in a semi-palmette, which again fit the decorative pattern set out above. The sura illuminations are largely conventional, their marginal ornament being made of symmetrical palmettes articulated around a central stem, although the colour palette is richer than normally in Kufic.

<sup>36</sup> Déroche, *Les manuscrits du Coran* (I, 1). Déroche's script classification is laid out in Ibid.; Déroche, *The Abbasid Tradition*; George, *The Rise of Islamic Calligraphy*, Appendix.

<sup>37</sup> Blair, *Islamic Calligraphy*, 122–124. *Lām-alif*, in this manuscript, has two arms that cross in the shape of an X in a way that could recall B.II; the horizontal tapering of initial *jīm* and 'ayn is also less marked than in classical D.III; nevertheless in its other aspects, the script of Is. 1411 remains close to D.III. For colour images, see Wright, *Islam*, 102–103 (Fig. 65–66). Another dispersed specimen written in style D.Vc was noted by Blair as a possible Maghribi Qur'an; Blair, *Islamic Calligraphy*, 121–122. However in this manuscript, *hamzat al-qaf'* is noted in green rather than yellow, whilst *alif al-waṣl* is left unvocalised; in the page published by Blair, the word *rabwā'* (Q. 23:50) has three dots, blue, red and yellow on the letter *rā'* (which carries neither a *hamza* nor a *shadda*): this reflects a convention different from what has been observed in the Maghribi tradition.

<sup>38</sup> Khaṭīb, *Mu'jam*, v. 10, 506, 507. See also for instance the red circles on f. 5a, ll. 4, 6, 'ulā'ika (unpronounced wāw); f. 6a, l. 3, *radadnāhu* (Q. 95:5, no *shadda*).

In a slight variation on this pattern, a fragment in D.II (BNF Arabe 378) has red dots for vowels and *tanwīn*, yellow dots for *hamza*, a red *shīn* for *shadda*, a vertical red stroke for *alif maḥdhūfa*, a horizontal red stroke for *madd*, and horizontal green strokes for *ṣila*.<sup>39</sup> The fifth verse markers are, again, comparable to the above. Two explanations may be suggested: either these manuscripts are earlier than the above corpus, and belong to a phase when the differentiation of Maghribi styles had not begun in earnest; or they are contemporaneous with these styles but reflect the production of a centre closer to the central Islamic lands, such as Qayrawan. It is, at this stage, not possible to bring an answer to this question.

**Figure 13. Double page from a Kufic Qur'an in style D.III with Maghribi vocalization (right, Q. 96:2-16; left, Q. 102:1-103:3). Dublin, Chester Beatty Library, Is. 1411, ff. 6b-7a. Page dimensions 12.8 x 20.2 cm.**

*(ii) Kufic manuscripts with limited Maghribi vocalisation*

Several other Qur'ans written in conventional Kufic styles have a more limited range of vocalisation that still reflects Maghribi conventions. Their most essential features are the yellow dots for *hamza* and red dots for vowels and *tanwīn*; but the notation goes a step further than this in the distinction from Madina and the Mashriq. Thus Khalili QUR372 is written in style D.II, but with thickened letter bodies that prefigure the aesthetic tendencies of the above corpus. In the vocalisation, in addition to the red vowels and yellow *hamzāt*, a blue dot combined with a thin horizontal red dash mark *ṣila* together with the position of *hamza* in cases of *waqf*, as in the Palermo Qur'an. An oblique red stroke followed by a blue dot appears on the *wāw* of the words *yu'min*, *mu'mina*, *yu'minū* (Figure 14, right-hand page, l. 6; left-hand page, ll. 1, 6): it appears to indicate the elision of *hamza* and its replacement by a *wāw sākina*, as evoked above for the Palermo Qur'an.<sup>40</sup> As already noted by Déroche, the full-page illuminations also closely resemble those of the Palermo Qur'an, which reinforces the presumption of a Maghribi origin.<sup>41</sup>

This range of vocalisation occurs again in a very similar Qur'an in style D.II (BNF Arabe 349e), which also has the type of semi-palmette identified above (e.g. f. 106r).

<sup>39</sup> Arabe 378 can be seen on Gallica and in Marie-Geneviève Guesdon and Annie Vernay-Nouri, *L'art du livre arabe. Du manuscrit au livre d'artiste* (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale de France, 2001), 90 (Cat. 59). Cf. also Déroche, *Les manuscrits du Coran* (I, 1), 99 (No. 118).

<sup>40</sup> The rule is set out in Khaṭīb, *Mu'jam*, v. 1, 30.

<sup>41</sup> Déroche, *The Abbasid Tradition*, 72–75 (No. 24). See also the images in Mikhail Piotrovsky, ed., *Earthly Beauty, Heavenly Art. Art of Islam* (Amsterdam: Lund Humphries Publishers, 1999), 110 (Cat. 54).



*Shadda* is marked by a small red *shīn*. Once again the blue dot and red stroke sometimes indicate, besides cases of *waṣl*, readings in which the *hamza* may be softened or elided.<sup>42</sup> In at least one place (f. 113r), a *lām* omitted in standard orthography has been added to the word *al-ladhīn*, even though this would have been obvious to any fluent Arabic speaker.

Nearly the same pattern can be observed in BNF Arabe 352b and Arabe 356h, two fragments each consisting of a single folio, both also in D.II: here one encounters yellow dots for *hamza*, a thin horizontal stroke for *ṣila* and a thin vertical stroke for *alif maḥdhūfa*. Blue dots are absent from both folios, although the fragments are too small to conclude that they did not exist in their original manuscripts. Both fragments again have *shaddāt* in the form of a red *shīn*: this sign, which also occurs in the Palermo Qur'an, was probably more widespread in the Maghrib than al-Dānī's treatise would imply. The type of semi-palmette identified in the Kufic-Maghribi corpus can again be seen in Arabe 349e (e.g. f. 106r) and Arabe 352b (f. 2r).

Five of the six Kufic manuscripts considered so far were written in style D.II, the exception being CBL Is. 1411. Thus the vocalisation seems to corroborate the hypothesis raised by Déroche several years ago on the basis of the illumination that this small stylistic group originated in the Maghrib.<sup>43</sup> However a minority of D.II specimens are vocalised in red or red and green, either because some schools in the same region used different conventions, or because D.II was also written further east.<sup>44</sup>

**Figure 14. Double page from a Kufic Qur'an in style D.II (Q. 2:220-221). London and Geneva, Nasser D. Khalili Collection, QUR372, ff. 67b-68a. Page dimensions 28.2 x 20.6 cm.**

### (iii) *Kufic manuscripts with Madinan-Maghribi vocalisation*

Several fragments in style D.I, all of them with seven lines to the page, but with different dimensions, display vocalisation based solely on red dots for the vowels and

<sup>42</sup> E.g. f. 109v, l. 6: *man shā'a 'an* (Q. 25:57) can also be read *man shā'an* or *man shā'ān*, with the elision or softening of one *hamza*; cf. Khaṭīb, *Mu'jam*, v. 6, 368. The word *yu'min* and its derivatives do not appear in Arabe 349e, and thus could not be checked.

<sup>43</sup> Déroche, *The Abbasid Tradition*, 37; Déroche, "Cercles et entrelacs," 605–606.

<sup>44</sup> See Déroche, *Les manuscrits du Coran (I, 1)*, 98 (Arabe 325e, with green *hamza* and orange *shadda*; Arabe 352d, red alone); Paris, *De Carthage à Kairouan*, Cat. 339 (red alone).

*tanwīn* and yellow dots for *hamza*.<sup>45</sup> Their sober, masterly D.I script laid down on large parchment leaves represents the apex of the classical Kufic tradition, much as in the Qur'ans of Amājūr and 'Abd al-Mun'im.<sup>46</sup> In these fragments (as also in Khalili QUR372 and BNF Arabe 349e), the yellow dot is placed before *alif* for *hamza* and after it for *hamza* followed or preceded by *madd* – the same convention applied with red dots in Mashriqi Qur'ans.<sup>47</sup> Diacritics tend to be sparse, and I was unable to observe a *fā'* or *qāf* amongst the available pages.<sup>48</sup> *Alif maḥdhūfa*, *waṣl*, *waqf* and *shadda* are simply noted as red dots, like in the Iraqi-Mashriqi tradition.

A leaf at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Figure 15) has additional green dots and dashes to mark variants, notably:

- Line 4 (Q. 47:37), *yukhrij aṣghānakum* (red, most readers) / *takhruj aṣghānukum* (green, Ibn 'Abbās, Mujāhid and others);
- Line 5 (Q. 47:38), *hā 'antum* with a green and yellow dot on the *alif*; several possible readings exist for this phrase; the ones noted here might be *ha 'antum* (yellow *hamza*, no *madd*; Ibn Mujāhid, Ibn Shannabūdh and others) and *hā 'antum* (green *hamza* with *madd*; Ibn Kathīr, Ibn 'Āmir, 'Āṣim, Ḥamza, al-Kisā'ī and others).<sup>49</sup>

Such uses of green have otherwise been observed in Mashriqi rather than Maghribi vocalisation.<sup>50</sup> Finally, in the same page, a blue dot sits on the line at the end of the word *'antum*, possibly to mark *ḍamm mīm al-jam'*.

**Figure 15. Page from a Qur'an in style D.I (Q. 47:37-38). New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 30.45. Page dimensions 23.8 x 33.3 cm.**

<sup>45</sup> BNF Arabe 5178c, esp. f. 5v (accessed on Gallica, 12/10/2012); double folio from anonymous private collection, Roxburgh, *Writing the Word of God*, Fig. 6; folio from the Mohammad Afkhami collection, Sotheby's (London), 24 October 2007, Lot 8 and George, *The Rise of Islamic Calligraphy*, cover image; Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Art Museums, Sackler Museum, 1956.197; Roxburgh, *Writing the Word of God*, Fig. 7; New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 30.45, <http://www.metmuseum.org/Collections/search-the-collections/140005627> (accessed 10/07/2012). The Harvard and New York fragments were previously in the collection of Rudolph M. Riestahl but do not appear to be from the same manuscript, as the latter is markedly larger than the former.

<sup>46</sup> George, 'Coloured dots: Part I,' ???.

<sup>47</sup> E.g. Roxburgh, *Writing the Word of God*, Fig. 6, right-hand page, *'ābā'akum 'aw 'ashadda dhikr<sup>am</sup>* (Q. 2:200): the first two *hamzāt*, which correspond to cases of *madd*, are after the *alif*; the last two, which do not, are before the *alif*. In the Harvard fragment, one green dot appears in the phrase *wa'llāhu ya'lamu mā fī al-samāwāt* (Q. 49:16). Its function could not be ascertained from a single occurrence.

<sup>48</sup> Initial letters occasionally have their diacritics marked in red, e.g. George, *The Rise of Islamic Calligraphy*, cover image, l. 5, *tabtaghū* (Q. 2:198).

<sup>49</sup> Khaṭīb, *Mu'jam*, v. 9, 34–37.

<sup>50</sup> George, 'Coloured dots: Part I,' ???.

These D.I fragments are thus close not only in script type, but also in vocalisation, to the Qur'ans of Amājūr and 'Abd al-Mun'im, the main difference being their yellow *hamzāt*. This suggests that they reflect a relatively early stage in the process of differentiation between vocalisation systems: more than any other manuscripts reviewed so far, they lend themselves to the hypothesis of a Madinan origin, and echo al-Dānī's assertion that red and yellow were used at the exclusion of any other colour in the vocalisation of Madina. But one cannot completely rule out, at this stage, an early derivation in the Maghrib, or indeed elsewhere.

### 3. *Beyond al-Dānī's horizon*

Al-Dānī's descriptions of different vocalisation systems have, in sum, proven remarkably accurate when confronted with extant manuscripts. His primary aim was to highlight the main conventions of his own region, to establish their Madinan roots, and to distinguish them from the customs of Iraq, the beating heart of the religious and grammatical sciences. As a consequence, there are many gaps left in our grasp of this phenomenon. A significant number of early Qur'ans do not carry any vocalisation at all. Expectedly, many others do not fall within al-Dānī's categories, either because they are from other regions or because their notation was only used in some circles in the regions that he does mention.

Numerous specimens, for example, have red dots for vowels, green dots for *hamza*, and in some cases blue or yellow dots for *shadda*.<sup>51</sup> This echoes the statement in Ibn Mujāhid's *Kitāb al-naqṭ*, as cited by al-Dānī, that some vocalisers marked vowels with red dots, *hamza* with green dots and *shadda* with yellow dots for personal copies of the Qur'an (hence, one might infer, not for public copies).<sup>52</sup> While this convention therefore seems to have been known in Iraq, we do not know whether it was widespread in this region or specific to it. Some Qur'ans also fall completely outside the framework provided by al-Dānī: thus in one manuscript written in ten lines of gold D.IV to the page, *fatha* is noted in red above the line, *ḍamma* in green in front of

<sup>51</sup> E.g. Kuwait, *Maṣāḥif Ṣan'ā'*. *Catalogue of an exhibition at the Kuwait National Museum* (Kuwait: Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyyah, 1985), 39 (No. 59); Piotrovsky, *Earthly Beauty*, 108 (Cat. 49). See also Dutton, "Red Dots (I)," 132–133 (Nos. 8, 11); Dutton, "Red Dots (II)," 1 (No. 15), 3, 7–8 (No. 17), 10–11 (No. 21). In the latter two cases, yellow dots are also used for variants and other functions.

<sup>52</sup> Dānī, *Muḥkam*, 23; Dutton, "Red Dots (I)," 119.

the line, and *kasra* in blue below the line.<sup>53</sup> This brings to mind another assertion by Ibn Mujāhid, again cited in the *Muḥkam*, that ‘readers comprehend this [dots in different colours] more quickly than dots in one colour.’<sup>54</sup> But again it cannot be linked to a specific region.

## Conclusion

Al-Dānī’s treatise, while not exhaustive, makes it possible to raise hypotheses about certain types of vocalisation. These can be briefly summarised as follows:

- A Qur’an vocalised with red dots alone for vowels, *tanwīn* and *hamza* follows Iraqi conventions, and may have been produced in Iraq, Iran or Greater Syria;
- A Qur’an vocalised with red dots for vowels and *tanwīn* but with yellow dots for *hamza* follows Madinan conventions, and may have been produced in Madina, or possibly the early Maghrib; additional signs in a thin red pen might have sometimes been used in Madina and the early Maghrib;
- A Qur’an vocalised with red dots for vowels and *tanwīn*, yellow dots for *hamza*, a green or blue dot and/or a red stroke for *ṣila*, and a red stroke or circle for *sukūn* follows Maghribi conventions, and may have been produced in the Maghrib;
- A Qur’an vocalised with red dots for vowels, *tanwīn* and *hamza*, and with the addition of green dots and signs for variants, may have been produced in Iraq, Iran or Greater Syria;
- The presumption of a Maghribi origin may be reinforced by other features associated with this region by al-Dānī; by the notation of fifth verse markers as a stylised *hā’* resembling a vertical semi-palmette; and by the notation of *fā’* and *qāf* with a single diacritical sign placed respectively below or above the letter;
- The presumption of a Mashriqi origin may be reinforced by the notation of *hamza* through a red dot to the right of *alif*; by the notation of *hamza* followed or preceded by *madd* though a red dot to the left of *alif*; by the absence of a

<sup>53</sup> Christie’s (London), 9 October 1990, Lot 44; Sotheby’s (London), 12 October 2000, Lot 3; Paris, *De Carthage à Kairouan*, Cat. 337. Cf. also Déroche, *Les manuscrits du Coran (I, I)*, 87 (Arabe 348e, No. 71), for an example of the same system with a different colour pattern.

<sup>54</sup> Dānī, *Muḥkam*, 23–24.

red dot for *alif al-waṣl*; and by the notation of *fā*’ and *qāf* respectively with one or two dots above the letter.

Some limitations ought to be recognised. First, the number of dated and localised manuscripts available for study remains small; one can only hope that more of these will eventually come under scrutiny. It is the strong convergence of their notation with the assertions of al-Dānī’s treatise that makes it possible to draw some inferences. Second, unless overlaps with the illumination can show that the vocalisation is original, any attribution made on this basis should, in theory, be applicable to the vocalisation rather than the whole manuscript. In practice, most manuscripts were probably vocalised in their region of origin, whether at the time of production or afterwards. Some may have travelled and eventually have received this layer of notation in a different region of the Islamic world; but the proportion of early Qur’ans produced without any vocalisation in one region, then carried into a different region and vocalised there must have remained relatively small. What can be reached, in cases where no overlaps have been observed, is therefore a reasonable hypothesis rather than an absolute certainty.

In the same line of thought, both masters and pupils also travelled, which may have led certain vocalisers to adopt conventions different from the dominant usage of their region, as suggested by al-Dānī’s constant references to the usage of a ‘majority’ (*‘āmmat ahl baladīnā*, *‘āmmat ahl al-mashriq*), and his allusions to different schools, especially in Iraq. For example, the Baghdadis and Syrians whom he met in Cairo may notionally have vocalised manuscripts there, and have gained a local following, even if limited; conversely, they could (just as theoretically) have learned Egyptian conventions (whatever these may have been) and brought them back to a given circle in their respective homelands.

The nuances observed in the application of the same basic formulae, for example in the Kufic-Maghribi corpus and in related classical Kufic manuscripts, do suggest localised usages, some of which must have been associated with a given teacher and his circle. At the image of al-Dānī, religious scholars were particularly prone to travel to Mecca for the *ḥajj*, and to seek knowledge of the Qur’anic sciences from respected authorities as they journeyed. An individual could thereby emulate a convention

learned at the other end of the Islamic world in his region of origin, and eventually bring his own modifications to it, in a movement sustained in different directions, generation after generation. Books carried by these people could also serve as a record of different conventions. An awareness of such complexities remains necessary when analysing these patterns.

Interestingly, the above evidence has only suggested few clear correlations between vocalisation and script types. It seems probable that D.I was common in the central provinces of the Abbasid empire, in a range of regions comprising Syria, the Hijaz, and presumably Iraq; but it remains difficult to assess how widespread this style was elsewhere. The closely related D.II, as we have seen, bears a distinct affinity with the Maghrib, though it is again too early to say whether it was exclusively written in this region. A manuscript with extensive Maghribi vocalisation has been noted in D.III, but many others in this style also use the Mashriqi system.<sup>55</sup>

Thus certain styles may have been more prominent in some regions than in others, but their geographical range might still have been wide for classical Kufic and indeed for NS. The main exception to the rule, the Kufic-Maghribi corpus, with its distinctive blend of calligraphy and vocalisation, is broadly datable to the fourth to fifth/tenth to eleventh century; its derivation from classical Kufic styles suggests that the latter might initially have been practised in the same area. In NS, some manuscripts written in a similar style to that of the Palermo Qur'an are vocalised solely in red;<sup>56</sup> and the famous Qur'an of the Nurse was copied in 1020 in Qayrawan using a monumentalised script comparable to that of the Isfahan Qur'an.

Finally, the aural dimension of early Qur'ans is brought into relief by the study of their vocalisation. Modern scholarship has tended to approach these manuscripts as the record of a text and as a flat canvas crafted for the eyes. But these were tri-dimensional objects meant to be displayed, studied and used for reading aloud. They conveyed not only an image, but also a sound that carried into the public sphere, at the heart of daily life in cities and towns. A latent antagonism between these two expressions of the Qur'an – the aural and the visual – was expressed through this

---

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Déroche, *Les manuscrits du Coran (I, 1)*, 103 (Arabe 349c), 105 (Arabe 357), 106 (Arabe 364b, 375d, 381e), 107 (Arabe 5178k).

<sup>56</sup> E.g. Déroche, *The Abbasid Tradition*, 138–139 (No. 75).

aphorism cited by Ibn Abī Dāwūd (d. 316/929) on the authority of early religious scholars: ‘Its most beautiful ornament is its correct recitation.’<sup>57</sup> These manuscripts await to be more fully studied as witnesses of the history of the Qur’anic text and its recitation.

---

<sup>57</sup> George, “Calligraphy, Colour and Light,” 103.